Mary the Mother
- of -
Christ

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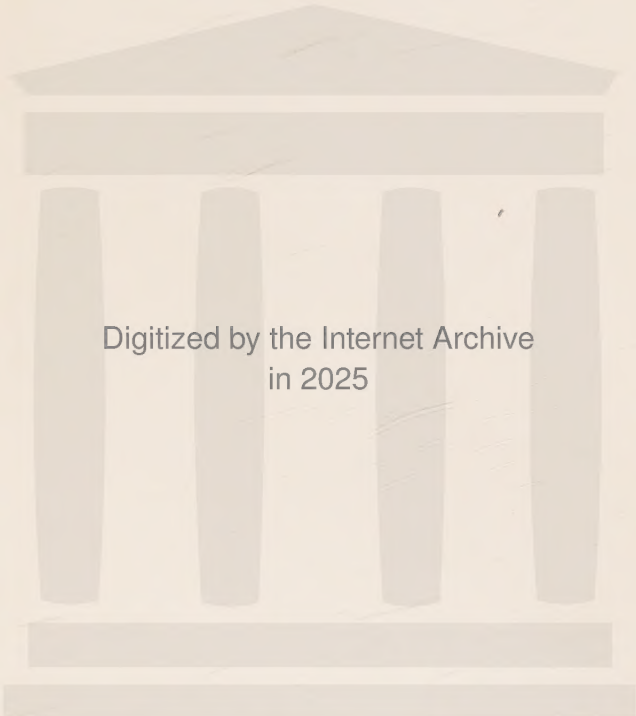
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MARY THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

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ILUSTRATED BY

GUSTAVO GLORYO

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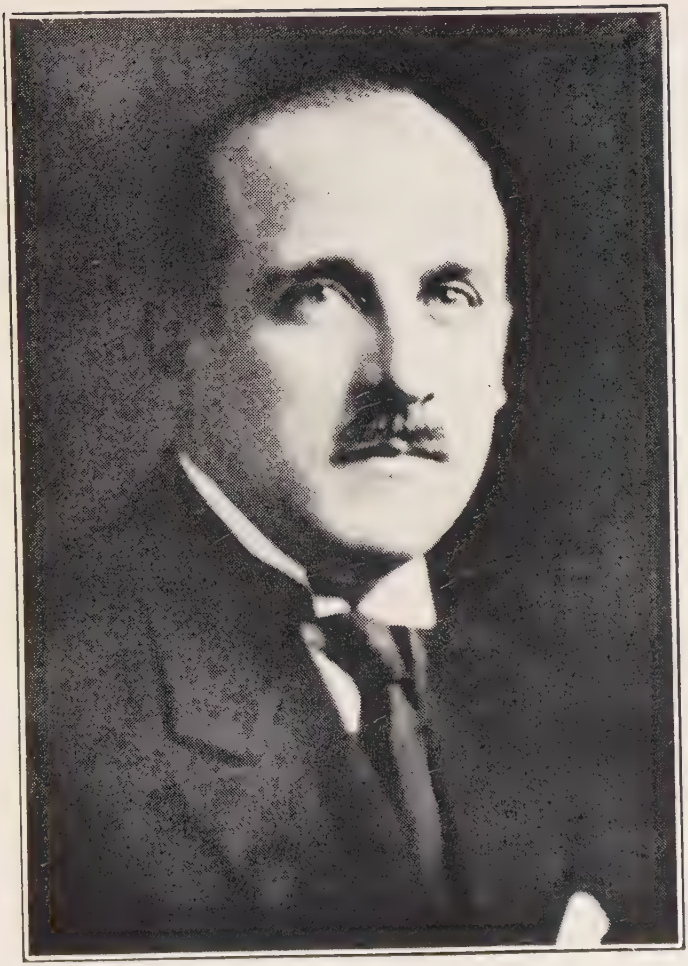
TO

MY WIFE

THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED



The Author

EDITORIAL NOTE

It has been my interesting privilege to transcribe into somewhat more idiomatic English the English of my friend Pablo Delgado. The sympathetic reader will appreciate that if this transcription were carried further, the book would lose in a certain quaintness of expression, all it might gain in academic style.

A few excisions have been made in the text where the author's thought was couched in language too colloquial for the reverence due his theme, but no original ideas of my own have been intruded. Rather have I marvelled at the fluency with which Mr. Delgado has written his first book, in a language not his own and acquired under difficulties.

Had the author chosen to write in Spanish it is probable that his diction would have been more classic and his inspiration less hampered; but his determination to write in the language of his friends this side of the Rio Grande, and his success in doing so, must compel their respect and admiration.

Mrs. H. G. Bonorden **Marie Sophrene Bonorden**

PREFACE

If I were a priest, a rabbi or a minister, or if I had to shepherd a congregation or a church, I should devote ninety per cent of my efforts to the women. And in doing so, I should be quite indifferent to the censure of the world.

If I were to be chosen by the gods to save a portion of the human race, my request would be: "Give me the women, and I will straighten out the men." For it is the women who are making our world a better place in which to live. Nor do I say this in a spirit of flattery, for I admire and respect women with great reverence, whatever may be their nationality.

Said Metge:

"No ignores que sin las mujeres el género humano habría perecido en Adán. No habría ciudades, castillos ni casas. No habría cuidadanos, artesanos ni labradores. No habría reyes, caballeros ni armas. No habría mercaderes ni comercio. No habría artes, leyes, cánones ni estatutos. No habria fiestás, juegos, danzas ni amor, que sobrepuja á todo. Nadie sabría los movimientos de los ciclos, y de los planetas, ni tendría conocimiento de ellos, ni buscaría las operaciones ocultas de la naturaleza. Nadie sabría por qué el mar se hincha, ni de qué modo infiltra el agua en las venas de la tierra, para recobrarla después; ni la mutua trabazón de los elementos, ni la influencia de los cuerpos celestes, ni á qué obedece la diversidad de las cuatro estaciones del año, ni la brevedad ni longura de la noche, ni por qué responde Eco desde las concavidades cuando el hombre grita, ni por qué el levante atrae las nubes lluviosas, ni por qué tramontana las implele, ni por qué tiembla la tierra, ni multitud de fenómenos naturales cuya enumeración te cansaría si te la hiciese especificadamente."

INTRODUCTION

If I might secure the attention of my countrywomen to what I have to say in this book, I would gladly give every drop of blood in my veins, sooner than I would hurt their sensibilities through their religious beliefs. My one object is to help at least one soul to look at the Virgin Mother, as it were, through the magnifying glasses of a few verses in the first Gospel, third and fourth chapters, and one verse of the Acts.

Why does the author say in his Preface that he prefers to deal with women in matters of religion? Because when it is a matter of dying for your country, you men good or bad, religious or unbelievers, in every country you die well. But when it is a question of living for Christ to the end, you desert the Cross, and they do not.

It was the women who remained near the tree while the first Christians ran like cowards. Mind you, the Apostles of the Lord. It was one

of these fragile and docile members of the weaker sex who stood with a handful of friends near the sinful bodies of two crucified thieves and contemplated the death of Christ.

Why the Holy Spirit has preserved for us so much about Jesus, Peter, Paul and others, and so little of this First Lady of all lands, we do not know, and we may not complain. Queen she is, not only of earth, but of whatever planets may be inhabited by humanity.

This book is written strictly for mothers and women of maturity. Men may be allowed, however, to peep within its covers and gain a glimpse of the Virgin Mother "whose soul was pierced by a sword" that thoughts from many hearts might be revealed.

So I am going to take the pleasant privilege, as Giovanni Papini said, "to say of her what has never been said of any woman."

Pablo L. Delgado.

June 1, 1929,
El Paso, Texas.

THE WEDDING

MARY is first found at a wedding, in fact, at her own. Quite a different place, this, from the poor chamber of sickness and pain where she later gave birth to her glorious Son.

No people are more accustomed than the Orientals to make their weddings occasions of festivity. They celebrate the nuptials of their sons and daughters with display and magnificence consistent with their rank and wealth, over a period of several days. In fact, "marriage" is used in the plural in the first Gospel, because these feasts continued for a succession of days. From the direction of Laban to Jacob, "Fulfil her week," Jacob knew his instructions were to keep the usual marriage feast; and it is recorded of Samson that at his marriage he made a feast for seven days; so used the men of old to do. And the rabbis

inform us that these seven days of feasting constituted "a matter of indispensable obligation upon all married men."

So the marriage of Mary had existed for the usual length of time before she and her husband came to live together as man and wife; and she found herself to be already pregnant.

Suppose yourself to be a virgin; imagine yourself deeply in love with an elderly gentleman, whose hand you have accepted in the holy bonds of matrimony, and while the wedding celebration was still at its height you found yourself, still a virgin, yet unmistakably **enciente.** Not a peculiar disease, this, which has come upon you suddenly. You are healthy, good and wise; just newly wedded and with your family and friends still enjoying the festivities. You are not sick from the wine, because there is none; this is a poor wedding. But your feelings convince you that you are to become a mother because **there is a child in your womb.**

This had never happened before; it will never happen again.

A human, virgin female created a child without the help of a male.

God has made a human being by three different methods up to this time: Adam from the dust; Eve from the man, Adam; Cain from the union of Adam and Eve. Why, if He pleases, shall He not take flesh from this Virgin, Mary, for His only begotten Son, for His fourth way.

We find Mary in a conspicuous place in the wedding, by her husband's side, in the midst of the people of the little town of Nazareth. The groom was not a rich and influential member of the community, perhaps not even a leading citizen; but he was just, and very religious. Every Saturday, after closing his carpenter shop, he was sure to be found in the synagogue. His shop was where the simple coffins were manufactured for rich and poor alike, and through his useful trade this man was known of all. Still unmarried, although of mature age, sober and industrious, respected; when he came inside the sacred place of worship all eyes were upon him, including the eyes of the still unmarried women, and particularly one who had a priest related to her.

In this spiritual and religious atmosphere Joseph and Mary began to love each other. Here they became thoroughly familiar with every part of the law and the prophets. They heard the Old Testament expounded; the Old Covenant; the Pentateuch. It had all been inscribed upon their hearts, as though with indelible ink. They knew that in spite of Roman influence, all Jews including themselves were doing their utmost to preserve the Jewish law. So with glad hearts they sang the Psalms of David and rejoiced in the privilege of hearing the word of God and praising Him in the synagogue in the good old fashioned orthodox way.

The good rabbi wears his head dress of contrasting colors; on his forehead is bound the phylactery, a little square box tied on with a narrow black ribbon; his feet are shod with sandals, and his beautiful prayer shawl attracts much attention. Mary and Joseph are always present, keeping up their religious beliefs, and are very good Jews. They support their church, obey all the dictates of the rabbi and those he transmits from the higher ecclesiastical authorities in Jerusalem.

God had of old time spoken unto the fathers through the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners for four hundred years since Malachi issued his final admonition. The Jewish people had only to be in their accustomed places each Saturday to hear the law and the prophets read to them. The mighty words of the last prophets who were raised up four hundred years since, were still ringing clearly in their ears. It was for the priest to preserve the knowledge, and for them to seek it from his lips, for the priest was the messenger of Jehovah of Hosts.

Mary had a priest among her own kinfolks. Should she not know the law, to keep it?

But now, in spite of knowledge, in spite of act, in spite of law, in her innermost heart she knew her physical condition. Newly wed, she was found with a child. Never had she been touched by a male in the embrace of love, not even by the man who has just given his name to her. In the evenings of the early days of her married life, she retires to her place of rest, and deeply meditates. More than once she must have exclaimed: "What on earth is the matter with me?"

Meanwhile her just husband rehearsed in his own solitude one portion of the law: "If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, and lay shameful things to her charge, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say I took this woman, and when I came nigh unto her, I found not in her tokens of virginity; then shall the father of the damsel and her mother take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate; and the damsel's father shall say unto the elders: I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; lo, he hath laid shameful things to her charge, saying I found not in thy daughter the tokens of virginity; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the garments before the elders of the city.

The elders of the city shall take the man and chastise him, and they shall fine him an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife, he may not put her away in all his days. But if this thing is true, that the tokens of virginity were not found in the dam-

sel, then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house; so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee."

Matthew tells us that Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man, and not willing to make Mary a public example, was minded to put her away privily. The love of his old age, he could not bear to see her stoned by the recent guests at his wedding.

Mary, most beautiful of all women; even in mediaeval days she was so considered. Both monks and poets exhausted their vocabularies in search of words of admiration; they strained the Latin language to express her beauty and benignity, her chastity and her heavenly glory. Her attributes of motherhood and virginity competed for eulogy. Conceptions of her physical graces filled the thoughts of schoolmen and peasantry. The elder Notker of St. Gall called her "the most beautiful of all virgins." Albertus Magnus devotes more than thirty pages to the praise of Mary's corporeal beauty. In his expositions of Canticles 1:15,

"Behold, thou art fair, my love," he comments upon the beauty of her hair, her shoulders, her lips, her nose, her feet and other members of her body. Bonaventura's hymn in her praise abounds in tropical expressions such as: "She is more ruddy than the rose and whiter than the lily."

Werher of Tegernsee sang about 1173: "Her face was so virtuous, her eyes so bright, Her manner so pure, that among all women, None could with her compare."

In a remarkable passage, St. Bernard pictures her in the celestial places, drawing attention to herself by her form and beauty, so that she attracted the king himself to desire her. A century and more later on, Dante, enjoying Paradise in Bernard's company, thus portrayed his vision of Mary:

"Ante sus juegos y sus cantos vi sonreir una beldad, que infundia el contento en los ojos de los demás santos. Aun cuando tuviera tantos recursos para decir como para imaginar, no me atreveria a expresar la mas mínima parte de sus delicias."

Paraiso, Canto XXXI.

Bernard's homilies on this portion of Scripture are the most famous collection of the Middle Ages. Alanus at Insulis, who calls Mary "the Tabernacle of God, the place of the Celestial King," says that this refers to the Church, but also in a special and most spiritual way to the glorious Virgin. Priests and writers vied in expounding this portion of the Old Testament, and an abbess represented the Virgin as singing to the Spirit:

"My Beloved is mine and I am His. He will tarry between my breasts."

The Holy Spirit responded:

"Thy breasts are sweeter than honey."

Samiana named Mary "The door to Heaven" and "The window of Paradise."

Anselm called her "The vestibule of universal propitiation, the cause of universal reconciliation, the vase and temple of life and salvation of the world," based upon the description given in Proverbs 3:8. A favorite expression for the Virgin Mother among these writers was "The Tree of Life."

So this Tree of Life, this Superlative Woman, was put away "privily" by Joseph.

Picture Mary, newly wedded, a prisoner in

her own home. What a shock, that on the threshold of her honeymoon the man who had won her heart, her husband, doubted her purity and fidelity; and yet she, part of him, flesh of his flesh, has confessed to him that she has a child in her womb. Only the knowledge she has of her innocence sustains her in this bewildering period of her life.

But a few short weeks before, this humble young girl of Nazareth was planning to have her own home, beside the carpenter shop of her lover, and to continue from a somewhat elevated position her simple social relationship with friends and relatives; now, within a few days since the rabbi has performed her marriage rites, not Christian rites, mind you, but Jewish, and without being in fact a bride, she has become lonelier than the loneliest girl in all Jewry.

Do you differ with me? Then you may read, as I have, the only authority we have on the life of this outstanding personality, Mary, the Mother of Christ, which is the Gospel itself. Then you may think, as I have thought, and sympathize, as I have sympathized, with her unique position.

THE ANNUNCIATION

MARY, deserted in her own home by her husband, secluded from the eyes of the wondering people of Nazareth. Mary, the only woman throughout the centuries whom God had cast His eyes upon to honor in an intimate way, suffering at the hands of the just Joseph the tortures of humiliation for her physical condition, yet utterly innocent of its cause.

What a problem for the psychologist! What moments of anguish, of bewilderment, torment her youthful mind. How account for her singular condition, and yet, has she not many times heard the great prophecy recorded in the scriptures of Isaiah?

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Oh, but it was incredible that God should

select a humble maiden of Nazareth for his bride, when it was universally admitted that no good could come out of the dusty little village. Were not the elite of the religious and substantial people of the Lord to be found in Jerusalem, and would He not select a mother for His Son from among their daughters?

Isaiah, refined, aristocratic, highly educated, a well bred member of the best society in Jerusalem, was called by God to fulfill a mission. Since his time humble Amos has followed with his message, but is now almost forgotten; besides, four hundred years have passed since the cry of the last prophet, without any manifestation from God. A long, long silence, and yet the people still waited for the Messenger; though of them all the least expectant may have been sweet Mary.

Even now, in her place of solitude at this turning point in her life, probably Mary is thinking more of her strange marriage relations and future position in the home than of her instrumentality in furthering the great plan of God, but in the midst of deep meditation an uninvited guest invades her seclusion and startles her with thoughts previous-

ly strange to her domestic mind. It is that Ambassador of God, the Angel of the Lord, and he came unto her and said:

"Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee." But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast about in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the Angel said to her:

"Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord shall give unto Him the thorne of His father, David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

And Mary said unto the Angel:

"How shall this be, seeing that I know not a man?"

And the Angel answered and said unto her:

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. Wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, thy kinswoman, she

also hath conceived a son in her old age. And this is the sixth month with her that was called barren.

For no word from God shall be void of power."

And Mary said:

"Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord; be it "into me according to thy word." And the Angel departed from her.

In those days Mary arose and went into the hill country with haste into a city of Judah.

Observe the coincidence. Joseph was receiving instructions from the Lord at the same time, not by voice like Mary, but through a dream in which the celestial visitor dictated to him the will of God. Unquestionably he had gone to his bed pondering the case of Mary, which weighed heavily on his heart during his daily labors and broke his well-earned rest at night. But in the midst of his troubled dreams the Lord said to him:

"Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His

name Jesus, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins." And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the Angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth a son, and he called His name Jesus.

From these words of the first Evangelist, "and knew her not," we have a perfect picture of the self-control of Joseph. He goes to Mary's room, makes his peace with his wife, makes his explanation and listens to her story of the marvelous visitation; then draws her kindly from her solitary prison to his arms and confidence, yet knows her not as wife until her Son is born. Is there no lesson in this self-imposed restraint for men, brave enough in other matters, but cowards in control in this?

And so Mary received sufficient time to bring her child into the world undefiled; her first-begotten, not the last, but the only begotten of the Lord.

When Matthew refers to the first-born child of Mary, he surely implies that she bore a later child; and when John speaks of the only begotten Son of God he is surely teach-

ing that God had only one Son. If my readers will but read the Gospel in the spirit of prayer, since the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life, this interpretation will clarify any question which may have arisen on this humanly interesting phase of Mary's domestic life.

MARY ON HER JOURNEY ALONE

MARY thinks deeply on the last words that the angel said to her before his departure:

"And behold Elizabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power."

She leaves in haste, traveling on foot all the way and carrying as baggage but a small bundle in her journey towards Judea where her cousin Elizabeth lived.

This trip is not her honeymoon trip; she leaves her home and husband behind because of a burning desire to be alone with this elderly woman who also had to go through strange and ambiguous experiences.

Mary, much excited, rushes across Samaria and probably stops for a short time in the out-

skirts of the town of Sychar, near that parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, and takes a drink of water from Jacob's well upon the same spot where her Son, thirty years later, addressed a woman of Samaria in words that have been for all generations a fountain of water springing up unto Eternal Life.

Yet she had hardly brushed away the dust of the road when she stepped upon the threshold of the house of her cousin Elizabeth, her nearest relative in Judea. She must have traveled with the spirit of the Angel, and the same spirit which touching Elizabeth, compelled her to exclaim aloud the same salutation that the Angel had days before addressed to Mary: "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!" Nobody knows what the salutation of Mary to Elizabeth was, but it must have been something divinely soft and tender, dictated by the same Spirit which caused the offspring of Elizabeth to leap in her womb.

Mary's visit to Elizabeth was as unexpected as that of the Angel to Mary in Galilee.

"And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For behold as the voice of thy salvation came into mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy and blessed is she that believed for there shall be a fulfillment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord."

This Jewish woman pregnant six months ahead of Mary, knew what she was talking about. Her husband was a good preacher and she herself a daughter of Aaron, both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and in the ordinances of the Lord blameless. "Mother of my Lord," she knew well she could not call her the mother of God, because God is in Heaven and has no mother. And besides all her people and relatives and her husband the priest never before had mentioned the possibility that God the first person of the Trinity might have a mother.

So this great Virgin must be the mother of the second person of the Holy Trinity, God's Son, the Lord.

"Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah, and the fruit of the womb is His reward, as arrows in the hand of a mighty man."

WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

ELIZABETH, being married for a long time had convinced her little world that the time had passed for her to bear children, because she was barren and she and her husband were now well stricken in years; but both were hungry for a child.

The mortification of the congregation that she was without child was felt in the heart of the preacher's wife. What was more appropriate for this spiritual leader who was so much affected by his wife's unhappiness over being childless than to offer a prayer from the middle of the people directly to God asking for a son?

Zacharias' prayer was answered and he was to have a sober son, forerunner of the Lord, six months older than the first born child of Mary.

God granted them the grace and privilege to become parents notwithstanding their old age and that Elizabeth was considered a barren wife. The miracle was performed. Elizabeth earnestly thanked God for freeing her from the shame cast upon her by the reproach of the people.

In the case of Mary, the miracle was still greater, as no special request had been made either by Joseph or by Mary, the charming Virgin. Why, she had only worried over the preparation of her wedding festivities and had not concerned herself in the least about her future married life. She was very young and entirely dependent on her husband's skill to steer their matrimonial ship through the ocean of matrimonial life; why should she anticipate any troubles whatever when she was overwhelmed by the joy of her approaching wedding?

With her heart full of gladness and surrounded by her cherished ones on the solemn occasion of her wedding, even in the midst of dancing the feast was interrupted that God might assert Himself in His inscrutable ways looking towards the salvation of mankind.

Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!

THE MAGNIFICAT

MARY still standing on the threshold of the door of Elizabeth's home, uttered one of the greatest addresses ever expressed by woman's lips.

"My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour."

What she had in her womb was to become her Saviour, of course. She was a part of humanity and He was to become the Saviour of mankind.

"For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaid for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Mary recognizes that she is the maidservant of God; she is very much interested not only in what history will say about her, but that all generations shall call her blessed, and they have and even more.

"For He that is mighty hath done to me great things and Holy is His name."

Holy is His name, she said; Not "mine" because He is the One that has done great things unto me, and not I unto Him.

"And His mercy is unto generations and generations of them that fear Him."

Mary, in her inspiration, speaks to a wonderful audience composed of one soul, Elizabeth, who was to be the mother of the orator greatest, next to Christ, the world has known, John the Baptist, who moved the multitude to repentance; and His mercy, she said, is unto generations and generations of them that fear, not me, but Him.

Old Testament

And Hannah prayed: My heart exulteth in Jehovah. —I. Sam. 2:1-10.

My soul shall make her boast in Jehovah: The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad. Oh magnify Jehovah with me.—Psalms 34:2-3.

And she vowed a vow, and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a manchild, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.—1 Samuel 1:11.

Jehovah hath done great things for us.—Ps. 126:3.

He hath sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant forever. Holy and reverend is His name.—Psalms 111:3.

But the lovingness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.

And His righteousness unto children's children.—Psalms 103:17.

"He hath showed strength with His arms: He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He hath exalted them of low degree. The hungry He hath filled with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath given help to Israel, His servant that He might remember mercy (as He spake unto our Fathers) toward Abraham and His seed, forever."

THE TWO WOMEN

MARY, the pregnant Virgin, away from home and husband, spent most of her time with her cousin Elizabeth, the barren wife of the speechless priest. There perhaps, she heard the story of the wonderful Boy that was to be born from her.

Mary and Elizabeth did not realize that they themselves were the living tabernacles wherein they carried one the first Prophet of the New Dispensation and the other the last Prophet of the Old Testament, the world's two greatest preachers.

Elizabeth was happy because she was to give birth to her first and only son; better late than never, although she may have worried because she might not live long enough to see her son succeed in all of his undertakings.

The Virgin Mary perhaps never dreamed that the son of her cousin soon to see the light

of day was to be the harbinger of her own child, and the man who was to be his Baptizer; his head granted as a prize at the request of a lustful dancer, thirty years hence. A tragic end for the creature shaken in his mother's womb by the sweet, gentle voice of Mary.

Nearly ninety days had passed in the mutual interchange of impressions. At the side of that old woman who was also to become a mother, Mary appeared most beautiful, one crowned with the halo of youth, and the other with deep affliction. Mary was like Spring at the side of Winter; Life by the side of Death; the light of morning pushing the last shades of night towards the west; an edelweiss growing on the top of a snow peak. They were the past and the present in a close embrace; the cradle and the grave mysteriously beckoning to each other.

What a grief in the heart of the old lady to think of leaving this earth, abandoning her son who had a great mission from God to perform.

What a great pain for the young one to have to become the mother of a child that although begotten of God as the second perfect

man was destined to become a martyr, to die on the cross for the redemption of men and take His place at the right of the Father remaining there for all eternity pleading for all of us mortals.

Mary, not knowing that in six months she was to visit Judea again, got ready to return to Galilee where her husband and the rest of her people were anxiously waiting for her. They did not know that the Angel of the Lord had visited Mary's relatives in Judea. How could they know such a thing if the Gospel had not yet been written nor even proclaimed for the first time. The Man who was going to proclaim it was yet in his mother's womb!

JOHN'S BIRTH

MARY had hardly reached Nazareth after her absence of nearly three months in Judea, when she heard the news of the birth of John with the spirit of the prophet of old, Elias. She was never to see this baby, that had the hand of the Lord with him.

She was now sorry she had not stayed just a few more days with her cousin to witness the return of speech to Zacharias, and the thrill of the people who were fear stricken. All these happenings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country.

And all who heard the news laid it up in their hearts, saying: What then shall this child be? Mary, "entre tanto" awaits the arrival of her own one and thinks of the wonderful boy who was taken from the mountains to the desert where he was to grow up and wax strong in spirit.

THE DECREE

PALESTINE had the language and most of the customs of the former conquered Greeks, but now they were governed by the great Roman Empire, and the will of the Emperor was obeyed even in the most remote province.

A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. And the governor Caesar had in that corner of the world was Cyrenius, who was to see this decree obeyed and that all went to enroll themselves; every one went to his own city, and Mary living in the world was not an exception. She was not fortunate enough to stay like Elizabeth in her last days of sickness in her own home to enjoy the comforts a woman should have in the most trying moments of her life.

Joseph, belonging to the house and family of David, well established in the town of Beth-

lehem, was to be there with his family the day of registration. It was a law to be enforced regardless of the conditions of the country which had no means of transportation.

Mary, in her last period of pregnancy, just about to give birth to the Son of God, that God had promised to the world, had to appear there also for registration.

Mary now took the same road she traveled when she came from Galilee across Samaria to Judea to see her cousin Elizabeth, but instead of being accompanied by a family that was not her own she is glad to be by the side of her husband. Not a single accident happened. As before, Mary left Galilee crossing all the province of Samaria and just to get a drink, she stopped again at Jacob's well in the outskirts of the city of Sychar where her Son years later would deliver to a single soul—a woman—one of His greatest sermons.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

MARY, with her husband, had just reached Jerusalem when she began to have the pains of motherhood. They hurried to Bethlehem, their destination, but they could not find a place to engage a room. The Inn that on other occasions Mary had occupied, was full. While drifting around looking for a place, Mary, accompanied by her husband and compelled by the imperative necessity of giving birth, walks into a corral and makes herself at home in a manger.

Why should she not! If there were hospitals or sanitariums, they were only for rich visitors and the people of higher social standing, who could afford to live in luxury, while they were away from home under the compulsion and orders of their government. But they, poor, humble and sick, considered outcasts in social circles, were not to think of the

material things of life for their comfort because they were beyond their reach.

They accepted gladly from a Judean family only a part of their manger with the promise not to disturb the animals. It was in this unsanitary place, all strewn with manure, that the perfect Man, God's only Son, and the first of Mary, saw the light of day. Mary, sleeping by the side of her husband in the Manger, is still a Virgin, but now a mother because she has brought forth her first born Son.

THE SHEPHERDS

"AND THERE were shepherds in the same country abiding with their flocks in the fields, and keeping watch by night over their flocks. And an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them and they were sore afraid, and the Angel said unto them: 'Be not afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God and saying:

'Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth peace among men.'

"And it came to pass when the angel went away from them into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another: 'Let us now go even un-

to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.' And they came with haste and found both Mary and Joseph and the Babe lying in the manger and when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this Child.

"And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings pondering them in her heart." "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more her anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world."

THREE WISE MEN

THE VISIT of the shepherds to Mary made all the people wonder at the things which were spoken to them. The humble young mother, who twenty-four hours before had walked into the yard of the mansion and lain in a manger to give birth, is now taken in arms into the "house." Mary is now living upon charity; her husband by this time had exhausted the small fund that he had taken with him thinking it would suffice for the round trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem; taking ample time to register and never expecting that Mary would be confined there; for notwithstanding they both well knew the prophecy, they were surprised that it should be fulfilled right on this occasion. Almost penniless, Mary is lodged in this house and attracting a great deal of curiosity. They received other visitors who were not poor, neither ignorant, like the shepherds of the mountains of Judea, but Three

Great Wise Men followed by a large retinue of servants that had been on their way to Bethlehem with the Kings, since Mary was peacefully living in her husband's home in Nazareth.

These visitors were kindly received and when they saw the wonderful Child, they fell down on their knees and worshiped Him. How strange it may have been to Mary, who was only accustomed to worshiping Jehovah!

The next great event of that day, which she saw, to her great surprise and astonishment, was that these Wise Men, opening their treasures, offered gifts to the Babe, gold, frankincense and myrrh, which she accepted and put away with her belongings. She is now the richest guest in the house and city. She learned later that these Wise Men came from the East and stopped at Jerusalem asking: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we saw His star and are come to worship Him." "And when Herod the King heard this he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people he inquired of them where the Christ was born and they said unto him:

"In Bethlehem of Judea, for there it is written through the Prophets:

> And thou Bethlehem, Land of Judah,
> art in no wise least among the Princes
> of Judah, for out of these shall come
> forth a Governor, who shall be Shepherd
> of my people Israel."

Then Herod summoned the Wise Men and learned from them exactly at what time the star had appeared.. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said: "Go and search out exactly concerning the young Child, and when ye have found Him, bring me word that I also may come and worship Him. And then, having heard the King, they went their way; and lo! the star which they saw in the East went with them and before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

A TRIP TO JERUSALEM

MARY, after obeying the Civil Law, Caesar's decree, by enrolling with her husband in the city of David where they belonged, had also to comply with the divine decree, the Law of God.

As Jesus, when He was thirty-two years old, said: "Think not that I come to destroy the law of the prophets; I come not to destroy, but to fulfill." So this was the law enforced and obeyed by all religious Jews.

THE LAW

SPEAK unto the children of Israel, saying: If a woman conceive seed and bear a man-child then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her impurity of her sickness shall she be unclean, and in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised, and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled. But if she bear a maid-child, then she shall be unclean two weeks as in her impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying three-score and six days. And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb one year old for a burnt offering, into the door of the tent of the meeting unto the priest and he shall offer it before Jehovah, and make atonement for her and she shall be cleansed from the foun-

tain of her blood; this is the law for her that beareth, whether a male or a female. And if her means suffice not a lamb, then she shall take two turtle doves, or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering, and the other for sin-offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

"As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called Holy unto the Lord."

"And when the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord."

"HOLY!"

He is the most Holy One that ever breathed the air of this earth!

No one could be called Holy if he did not open the womb.

So, now Mary is no longer a Virgin because her womb has been opened as she brought forth her first born Son—THE HOLIEST OF HOLY.

Mary, the Mother of the Lord, lost her virginity, not because she had marital relations

with her husband, but for the simple reason that God said in His law that only male or female that opens the womb, can be called Holy unto the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the only Holy perfect man that ever walked upon this earth. He is God manifested in flesh, He is God's Son the second person of the Holy Trinity that is at the right hand of God, pleading for us.

But His earthly mother who was a virgin until the moment of giving Him birth is now a mother.

IN JERUSALEM

MARY with her child and her husband came to Jerusalem: meanwhile King Herod impatiently awaits the return of the Wise Men from Bethlehem.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolations of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ and he came by the Spirit into the Temple. And when the parents brought the child Jesus that they might do concerning Him after the custom of the law, then he received Him unto his arms and blessed God and said:

'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, Lord, according to Thy word of peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light for

revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.' " And Mary was marveling at the things which were spoken concerning Him, and Simeon blessed her, and said unto Mary, His Mother:

"Behold, this Child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against Him; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul; that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

"And there was one Anna, that was a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity and she had been a widow even unto four score and four years) who departed not from the temple, worshiping with fasting and supplication night and day. And coming up at that very instant, she gave thanks unto God and spake of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem."

But there was to be one more thing before they had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

AT NIGHT Mary and her Son were taken by her husband and departed for Egypt, which being near, as Alford says, and having five Roman provinces independent of Herod, and much inhabited by Jews, was an easy and convenient refuge. Ah, blessed Saviour, on what a checkered career hast Thou entered here below. At Thy birth there was no room for Thee in the Inn, and now all Judea is dangerous for Thee. How soon has the sword begun to pierce through the Virgin's soul! How early does she taste the reception which this mysterious child of hers is to meet with in this world. And why is He sent to "the house of bondage?" Well, it once was that. But Egypt was a house of refuge before it was a house of bondage and now it has but returned to its first use.

Then as now existed the thirst for power, for the absolute control of man, by Church

and Government unfortunately manifested by tyranny and cruelty. This King thinks only of himself, although he is very old and his political career is almost at an end. He is very wretched; the few words of the three wise strangers have created consternation and destroyed the tranquility of his heart. Envy had struck deep its roots, and his soul was already stirred to deepest despondency which caused him to order his obedient chieftains to butcher the innocent children of Bethlehem.

The order was issued to slay all male children under two years of age in Bethlehem and its surrounding territory. This man could not even imagine that a child who had to wait thirty long years to perform His mission as a healer and spiritual leader would one day be looked upon as the "King of the Jews."

King Herod and all Jerusalem were immensely troubled from the effect caused by the words of the three Wise Men. Brief as they were, the message they bore wrought havoc in the heart of this despot and his people who were living in the eve of their dispensation and were not aware of that which was going to happen.

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the East and are come to worship Him."

The religious people knew well that the Messiah had to come so when they heard this strange message from the Wise Men, immediately they became troubled. The King did not know any other kind of kingdom than the one he was governing and his subjects were all willing subjects but they did not worship him.

So, it was very natural and human that jealousy should awaken in him and he ordered to his presence all chieftains, priests and scribes of the people from whom he inquired where Christ was to be born, and they said unto him that it would occur in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it was written in the Prophets.

"And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judea, art in no wise least among the princes of Judea: For out of thee shall come forth a Governor who shall be Shepherd of my people in Israel."

Herod privily called the Wise Men and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said: "Go and search out exactly concerning the

young child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word that I may also come and worship Him." "What a monster of a king! His heart was overflowing with envy and he wanted to get near enough to the child to harm Him, to kill Him and break the heart of Mary.

The Wise Men, being warned by God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, departed into their own country another way. This move of God saved Mary from losing her first born child but did not prevent her flight to a far country to escape the wrath of Herod. Mary, with ample money in gold, does not try to be what she is not in Jerusalem. She could well afford to display a little vanity in offering a lamb for her purification instead of two turtle doves, or two young pigeons, but saves the gold for the long journey to Egypt. Mary did not have the help of her mother, sisters and friends to care for her babe, when she most needed it. She had to do all by herself. Joseph took care of the animals as they traveled to Egypt and performed other work required by the travelers; in Egypt he worked at his trade.

Mary is not happy away from Nazareth and

her people, among the Egyptians with strange customs and religion; she longs for the day when they may be back in the beloved Fatherland. She spent the time exclusively with her Son, attending Him in all His necessities; she also missed the religious services in the Synagogue. Mary, in her short fifteen years had never before left Nazareth and she is very homesick for her country. This land she had never dreamed of visiting was where all the Jewish people were once kept in slavery, but what a difference: she is now in company of her husband and child, receiving the hospitality of that country that was so cruel to her people in past centuries.

Mary is very fortunate to have lived in her own times and not when the chosen people were wandering in the desert for forty long years. It was bad enough to cross it without wandering such a long time.

She prayed God for help, the same God that had helped her people out of Egypt from bondage; God, her Heavenly Father, to Whom no miracle was impossible; the God that dried the Red Sea to protect His people from being overtaken by the enemy which perished,

drowned by the angry waves of the sea moved by the mighty hand of God.

The Jewish people, then as now, had only one God, the Father, the Everlasting God, the Godhead, the First Person of the Trinity, and to Him alone were their pleadings addressed according to the law under which they lived; and Mary, being a Jewish woman had only Jehovah as her God. Often in the silence of the night she addressed God as she never did any other person, not even her husband, about spiritual things keeping and repeating her prayers in her heart.

Mary, in her exile, frequently thought that the presence of her child was the motive for Herod's wrath. What will happen when He shall have reached His manhood and uses the ability and talents bestowed by the Almighty upon Him? In all the history of Israel, she could not recollect a single instance of a maid giving birth to a child by God alone and then leaving the country to avoid death for her offspring.

She hears that Bethlehem, where she gave birth to her child, is now a city of mourning.

Rare was the house which did not lose a dear little one by murder. Hundreds of miles away from such a horrible scene she must have clasped her baby in her arms and joined in the anguish of all the mothers in Bethlehem; and bitterly crying she must have exclaimed: Oh! tears, how well and truly you are called the white blood of the heart!

Mothers of Judea, methinks you are asking why your innocent babes should be as rams caught in the thicket, whilst Isaac escapes. I cannot tell you, but one thing I know, that ye shall, some of you, live to see a day when that Babe of Bethlehem shall be Himself the ram caught in another sort of a thicket in order that your babes may escape a worse doom than they now endure. And if these babes of yours be now in glory, through the dear might of that Blessed Babe, will they not deem it their honor that the tyrant's rage was exhausted upon themselves instead of their infant Lord?

Herod's murderous purpose was formed ere the Magi set out for Bethlehem. "WHEN HE AROSE HE TOOK THE YOUNG CHILD AND HIS MOTHER BY NIGHT,"—doubtless the same night, Joseph and his family de-

parted into Egypt, and were there until the death of the king, Herod, which took place not very long after this. He died of a horrible disease.

Josephus tells us in the Antiquities of the Jews: "But now Herod's distemper greatly increased upon him after a severe manner and this by God's judgment upon him for his sins; for a fire glowed in him slowly which did not appear to the touch outwardly as it augmented his pains inwardly, for it brought upon him a vehement appetite for one food or another. His entrails were also ulcerated and the chief violence of his pain lay on his colon; an aqueous and transparent liquor also had settled itself about his feet and in a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly, nay farther his privy member was putrified and produced worms; and when he sat upright, he had a difficulty of breathing which was very loathsome on account of the stench of his breath and quickness of its return. He had also convulsions in all parts of his body which increased his stench to an insufferable degree. It was said by those who pretended to divine, and who were endowed with wisdom to fore-

tell such things, that God inflicted this punishment on the King on account of his great impiety; yet he was still in hopes of recovering though his afflictions seemed greater than what any one could bear."

BUT WHEN HEROD WAS DEAD—MISERABLE HEROD! Thou thoughtest thyself safe from a dread rival, but it was He only that was safe from thee, and thou hast not enjoyed even the fancied security!

MARY BACK IN NAZARETH

"GO INTO the Land of Israel" said the Angel who appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, not to the land of Judea for he was afterward expressly warned not to settle there, nor into Galilee for he only went thither when he found it unsafe to settle in Judea, but to "The Land of Israel" in its most general sense; meaning the Holy Land at large —the particular province being not as yet indicated. The Virgin Mother and Joseph had, like Abraham, to "go out" not knowing whither, until they should receive further directions.

FOR THEY ARE DEAD WHICH SOUGHT THE YOUNG CHILD'S LIFE.

A common expression in most languages where only one is meant, who here is Herod, but the words are taken from the strikingly analogous case in Exodus 4:19, which probably

suggested the plural here; and where the command is given to Moses to return to Egypt, for the same reason that a greater than Moses was now ordered to be brought back from it until the death of him who sought His life.

Herod died in the seventieth year of his age, and the thirty-seventh year of his reign. And Joseph arose and took the young child and His Mother and came into the land of Israel, intending as is plain from what follows, to return to Bethlehem of Judea no doubt, to rear the Infant King there in His own royal city, until the time should come when they would expect Him to occupy Jerusalem, "The City of the Great King." But when Joseph heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea in place of his father, Herod, he went instead to Galilee.

Archelaus succeeded to Judea, Samaria and Idumea, but Augustus refused him the title of King until it should be seen how he conducted himself; giving him only the title of "Ethnarch" (Josephus 17:11-14). "When Caesar had heard these pleadings, he dissolved the Assembly, but a few days afterwards he appointed Archelaus not indeed to be the King of the whole country but Ethnarch over the one-half

of that which had been subject to Herod, and promised to give him the royal dignity hereafter, if he governed his part virtuously. But as for the other half he divided it into two parts, and gave it to two other of Herod's sons, to Philip and Antipas, that Antipas who disputed with Archelaus for the whole kingdom."

Mary simply following the guidance of Joseph, who in his turn received the divine manifestations as the head of the Holy Family, returned to Nazareth after an absence of three years. Nazareth first appears in the New Testament as the place where Jesus passed His boyhood (Mat. 11:23; Luke 1:26, 11:4, 39, 51; John 1:46, seq.: Acts 1:38). It is evident from John 1:46 that Nazareth was an obscure place. Mary since her marriage had been living a life of turmoil, but is now back in her home town to nurture and instruct the Holy Child.

The author believes that we must not allow ourselves to entertain a grudge against the Mother of our Lord because a great portion of Christians may have given her more than her due. We must not be afraid to believe

too much, either of Mary's maidenly virtues or of her motherly duties and experiences.

"For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit in guiding the researches of Luke and in inspiring the composition of the third Gospel, especially signalizes the depth and the piety and the peace of Mary's mind.

If the Incarnation is difficult for some to believe, it was a hundred fold more difficult and almost impossible for Mary; yet she believed it with all the energy of a pure heart.

Faith is the ground of all greatness in human character; but never was there faith so unadulterated, so pure and so firm, or so hardly tried as hers.

THE MIRACLE

The life of the Mother of Christ was that of the wife of any ordinary poor tradesman. According to Matt. XIII:55, the townspeople asked: "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" While Joseph gained the livelihood for the family by his daily work, Mary attended to the various duties of housekeeping. St. Luke 11:40, briefly says of Jesus:

"And the child grew and waxed strong and full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him."

We hear no more of Angel choirs, of strange star-light, hope and expectation, of hostile rulers and miraculous escape. No one man seems to care to seek out the child whose birth had evoked such tumult and such marvels. No pilgrim comes to Nazareth. Mary's dreams of her ambition are fulfilled to live peacefully next to the carpenter shop where her husband, who seldom speaks, steadily does the day's

work. The Holy Child grows as other children grow, learns his "Shema" at Mary's knees; grows up to become Joseph's helper in his trade, plays with the children of the neighborhood, unrecognized as the Saviour.

The Evangelists tell us almost nothing of the events of Mary's outward life during the childhood of our Lord. Perhaps there was little to tell. Of her life, St. Luke has only one thing of importance to tell us: "And His parents went every year to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover."

This simple fact is sufficient; it gives us a concise summary of the calm piety which ruled the spirit of the family life in Mary's home. The most happy hours of Mary's life are neither flying nor with weighted wings, as the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, with the grace of God upon him.

There were many virgins in Israel in the days of Herod the Great, but only to Mary was given the lofty privilege of becoming the Mother of the Christ and the governess of her own boy.

It was at her knee that the Holy Child per-

formed great miracles, according to the mother of the author who taught him in their own humble **meson** or inn, that the little boy Jesus often made birds out of clay, and that "His hands were so divine that the birds escaped flying."

When the author was of the age of seven years, a terrible accident happened to him, of burning both his hands with lime that his mother intended to use to whitewash the house for the celebration feast of her Saint's Day. The accident caused her to offer a solemn vow to the Holy Child of Mary, and because we were poor, instead of gold, two small silver arms with hands were manufactured by the silversmith and offered to the "Santo Niño."

The author remembers the day when in his father's company he went, after a complete recovery, to offer this silver material symbol which was deposited in the altar of the Church.

They were put there among thousands of other "mandas" of different descriptions and values, well kept in glass cases fastened to the walls of the Colonial Cathedral; until the time of the Social Revolution of 1913 when Gen.

Urbina, a compadre of Gen. Villa, looted every church in Northern Mexico.

So was the miracle performed by the Holy Child, and so was the author taught by his beloved mother.

I thank God who deigned to summon her to His presence two years after this incident. I am indebted to her for all I am, as well as for my first lesson in Theology. She was my whole faculty and very conservative and dogmatic. Even if I do not agree with her now in some points of the science, I know very well that I owe to her, next to the Holy Spirit, all my love for Christ and it is this love that has driven me to seek the truth, searching for it in the Scriptures where I could not find the details describing the childhood of Christ while living at home directly under the care and guidance of His sublime Mother, the incomparable woman about whom I endeavor to write.

THE LOST CHRIST

MARY lost her Jesus. Dear reader, did you ever stop to think what it is to lose our Christ? "Woe to the soul that has lost its Christ." But fortunately for us only one who really was a Christian lost his Christ (Judas). Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah, the prophet, saying: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was valued whom they of the children of Israel did value."

Jesus in worshipping His Father, exclaimed: "While I was with them that Thou gavest me I have kept them and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition. That the Scripture might be fulfilled."

You very probably are a Christian, and not happy because you have lost Him temporarily. May God grant you time to find Him wherever you may have lost Him. We Chris-

tians always have to look for Him in the exact spot where we lost Him.

Mary lost Him in the temple, and found Him in the temple. We see visions in the Church of God, and we very often find Jesus only to lose Him again. Mary happy with her Son Jesus and her husband had left Nazareth in company with other families of Galilee to be present at the feast in Jerusalem.

This caravan was more animated than any before, as Mary used to come every year (Luke 2:41). But this time Jesus was in the company, and they were all alive. No sleep came to the eyes of the old and no weariness came to the young folks as they traveled to the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Jesus is now in the midst of the Doctors of Divinity in the Temple. He had a perfect right to be there so they could learn from Him and ask Him questions.

The poor and ignorant had Him first, including Mary and Joseph; but they wanted a little of the world in Jerusalem and forgot that He was only interested in His Father's business. And His Father's business is none other than His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Before Jesus had reached the Temple every one went to relatives or friends they had in the city, so the delegation from the most insignificant place in Palestine was all scattered.

Jesus, without money, father and mother, and very young, found His way to His Father's House.

At this age, according to St. Luke, our Lord is taken up for the first time to Jerusalem, at the Passover season, the main one of the three annual festivals, but Oh! with what thoughts must this youth have gone up. Long ere He beheld it, He had doubtless "loved the habitation of God's house and the place where His honour dwelt," (Psalms 26) a love nourished, we may be sure, by that "Word hid in His heart," with which in after life He showed so perfect a familiarity. As the time for His first visit approached, one could have caught the breathings of His young soul: "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord." "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, Oh! Jerusalem" (Psalms 42: 1; 87:2; 122:1).

He is well fed and well taken care of, while the rest of the flock of Nazareth are all hungry

and return to their homes without the unity in which they came, because they have no Jesus.

Mary and Joseph are also going back, and they too without Jesus are probably thinking of the material things of life.

Mary supposes Him to be in the company and was not the company religious?

What is the use of joining a congregation even if it is led by a consecrated man? This one was probably led by a good man like Joseph. He was "just" and still had no Jesus.

One must pity a congregation that is without the spirit of Christ and is yet anxious to have contact with God, be it Jewish, Roman or Protestant.

Mary traveled one day without Jesus and it took her three more to find Him. When she was fifteen miles away from Jerusalem, just as the sun was setting in the West and as she was getting ready to spend the night under the star spangled canopy of Samaria, a hostile territory, as also were the night and the beasts, she suddenly realized that Jesus was not with her. She could not tell miles away that Jesus was not in the company by just

listening to the singing and gossiping among the people.

She had left the great city of Jerusalem without giving a thought to her beloved Son. Jesus never did start one block on this occasion toward Nazareth with the company. They were evidently relatives and close friends in the crowd, but Mary had no right to start the journey back home without taking a good look at her Son Jesus, even if she were trusting Him to her kinfolks. She was so amused and entertained by some of the people, how else could it be explained that they took for granted that He was in the company? Not a bit hungry for His presence all day long. That she may have been absorbed in other matters while traveling is indisputable. Gossiping, caring for Joseph, a very old man, tending other youngsters, or perhaps she was tired and half sick herself. Still we can excuse her for not thinking of the best physician, for "When she came to herself" she turned immediately, leading Joseph by the hand, to her acquaintances and kinsfolk to seek Him, "But Jesus was not there." That is the last place we should look for Him, but for Mary it was the

first, another one of her blunders. Not one, with the exception of Joseph, offered to help Mary to find Jesus. The company began to lose its most consecrated members. Joseph followed Mary's footprints in the sands of Samaria, toward Judea; a "just" one also leaves because Jesus is not there.

Mary leaves all these lambs of God, not in their homes or sheepfolds but "out in the wilderness" to return to Jerusalem seeking the Blessed One. This time this woman is not sweeping a house, like the woman in the parable of whom Jesus said afterwards, "Who having lost a piece of silver searched a house," but she searched a whole country and a great city of many houses, not merely by inspection by thoroughly removing everything, sweeping it by the moonlight. Mary adds the diligent search of the eye and leaves no place unexplored until she found Him. In her despair and excitement to find Jesus she enters every public place, asks everybody in sight for Him. Hours pass and the second night without Him and Mary grows weary and heart sick. She hardly has strength to continue the search the second day. The streets of Jerusalem are

crossed and recrossed by the tiny feet of this half crazed woman who left behind something very dear to her heart without knowing it. This was not the only time that she was to walk the streets of the great city for her Jesus. Why not experience a little, while she is young and strong, in the fountain of grief.

Seneca said: "Un gran dolor nunca es largo."

Spurgeon also said: "If there was no sowing in tears, there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives, we could never lead our captivity captive. Our mouth has never been filled with holy laughter if it has not been first filled with tears."

The South American poet tells us:

El dolor es la cruz de la grandeza
El dolor hace martires y genios;
¡hiere el pecho y alumbra la cabeza!
Es el puñal que esplende y asesina,
la lluvia que entumece y que fecunda,
la flama que devora y que ilumina,

El dolor es filosófo y poeta,
con Diógenes fué sabio;
con Cristo, Redentor; con Job, profeta.
Y así siendo el dolor el que agiganta,
el pecho que más sufre es el más grande.
el cisne moribundo es cuando canta.

(The swan is dying when he sings).

Shakespeare briefly said: "Dad la palabra al dolor; el dolor que no hable gime en el corazon hasta que lo rompe."

Three days without rest, looking in every avenue until she prayed and she was led by the spirit to the Great Temple and there she found Him, where He is always, where He was when she left Him.

The author does not know the nature of the conversation in which He was engaged with the Doctors when He was found sitting down, not standing up among them as an orator, but as a layman wisely answering questions which amazed all the teachers.

And Mary, his mother, who had just reached there in the midst of the leaders of the people said unto Him: "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing."

"And He said unto them: 'How is it that Ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?'

"And they understood not the saying which He spoke unto them. And Jesus went down to Nazareth with them, and was subject unto them. But his mother Mary kept all these sayings in her heart."

NOTE: From this time no mention is made of Joseph. Next we hear of his mother and brethren (John 2:12).

A LIFE TIME OF HAPPINESS

MARY had suffered her first great sorrow at the time when Joseph was hesitating about taking her for his wife; she experienced her second great sorrow when she heard the words of Simeon at the Temple in Jerusalem: now occurred her third sorrow when she lost Christ, the shock of which probably caused the death of Joseph. No man that we read of in the Scriptures was so highly favored as Joseph, husband of Mary, because he constantly was near the person of our Saviour. From Christ's birth to Joseph's death, a period which I believe was at least more than twelve years, Joseph was the entrusted guardian of our Lord.

But now Mary is enduring the painful position of being a widow and she is entering an era of tranquility of eighteen long years, sufficient time to rest and spend in meditation about the things that for twelve years held her in perplexity. Mary, the most lovely widow

in Nazareth, is indeed the most happy woman on earth because she has a Holy Man around her house and a very skillful and obedient one. He was always ready to do her bidding. He was not only a blessing, but a material help to her, an inspiration to be near.

The author often in his meditation thinks of the days that Mary spent with her son Jesus, in her quiet home in Nazareth, and he wonders if Jesus ever preached a wonderful parable to the magnificent audience composed only of His beautiful mother.

Jesus in full charge of the carpenter shop had no opportunity to attend a college or study at the feet of the great doctors in Jerusalem. He had to face the world without an academic parchment and to cause the fury of the "regulars." He had to be a self-made man because from His heart was going to flow to all generations the great Sermon on the Mount, also many beautiful parables and other discourses about the Kingdom of God that no scholar and no library had treasured before.

The author does not agree with some theologians that in order to explain the perfect humanity of our Lord they must trace Him to

His studies in Greece and Arabia; they even put Him at the feet of the great teachers, but many, including myself believe that all the education He received was at the feet of Mary. A great Pharisee of the Church in San Francisco once very fluently remarked to the writer and dogmatically too, that Jesus studied thirty years in a Seminary to preach three. There is absolutely not an iota recorded in the Scriptures that will enlighten us about where He made His studies.

In the home of Mary and in His carpenter shop, "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

THEY HAVE NO WINE

MARY bid adios to her Son who leaves for the banks of the Jordan to be sprinkled in the river and while Jesus prepares for His baptism Mary prepares herself for the great wedding of a relative in Cana of Galilee. So when her Son returned with some disciples they were also invited to attend and Mary was there to receive and entertain them. Although coming from listening to a "dry" orator (John the Baptist) this disciple that deserted him to join Christ "wanted wine."

"And when they wanted wine," the beautiful widow, Mary, the mother of this new self-improvised preacher, noticing the thirst and desires of guests, addressed her Son with the following laconic "wet" speech:

"They have no wine!"

In other words, you must provide, O Lord, because all these people are suffering and this is a rich wedding, not like the one when You

were present at my wedding and Joseph's, and I had none because we were poor and the hour had not come. And Jesus answered her: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."

Oh, what a great privilege to be a servant, a domestic, "the help" in the sight of God.

In this rich man's home, in this oriental mansion, before the butler, the valet, and the lady's maid down to the cook and humble gardener, the mother of Christ gives a beautifully outlined, brief sermon of exhortation which conforms to all the rules of homiletics, with perfect poise, delivering her sermon in a conventional style that will please any professional speaker or professor, and her doctrine is the delight of Doctors of Theology and shall ultimately rejoice all Christians:

"Whatever He saith unto you, do it," she said.

There were still more happy days for Mary during the apostolic life of Our Lord. Mary stayed at home receiving the great news of her Son. The year of popularity was the most joyful for the mother of the first Christian Preacher. Mothers who have a son working

for Christ, think what it would mean to your hearts if you heard of the success your boy was having, moving the multitude with his eloquent sermons, bringing tears to dry eyes with his fervent prayers. All the people talking about your son, and at the same time thinking of you.

"Is not this the Carpenter, the Son of Mary?" they were asking, (St. Mark 6:3).

THE SEVEN WICKED SPIRITS

MARY was extoled by another woman and both interrupted the Master. Christ is very active now ministering the Word, giving to the world the doctrine He brought from Heaven. And in this particular instance He is found "praying in a certain place" according to Luke XI. And when He stopped addressing God one of His disciples requested Him to teach them as John also taught his disciples to pray. And Christ taught them the Lord's prayer, "The Parable of the Friend," and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And after casting out a devil from a dumb person, which made the people wonder, He began preaching one of His wisest and deepest spiritual discourses; and when He quoted "The Seven Wicked Spirits" which He had outlined, a woman outside in the multitude was moved to such an extent that she gave a peculiar testi-

mony for Mary, causing the interruption of the wonderful sermon.

"A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him: 'Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breast which Thou didst suck" (Luke XI:26). What the devil and the Seven Wicked Spirits that He was preaching about had to do with the womb and breast of Mary, the author does not know.

"Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it."

Jesus wanted to continue His sermon; He picked up where He left off "The Seven Wicked Spirits" (Matt. 12:45); when He is again interrupted, this time by the presence of Mary who had just arrived with Jesus' brethren. The twelve apostles were sitting down in two rows of six seats, as if they were a modern jury in a Court of Justice. The hall was packed to capacity; there were no seats; people swarmed outside in all directions, when the presence of Mary was felt. Some one called the attention of the speaker: "Your mother Mary and your brethren who are outside want to speak to You, Lord!" He immediately answered him that told Him so: "Who is my mother and

who are my brethren? For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

In reality, Jesus, in both these passages, placed the bond that unites the soul with God above the natural bond of parentage which united the Mother of Christ with her Divine Son.

The four Gospels do not mention any other public appearances of the Mother of Christ during the time of Jesus' journeys through Galilee. But we must remember that when the sun appears, even the brightest stars become invisible.

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST
THE SON OF MARY

WE NOW naturally expect to find Mary at Jerusalem. The prophecy of Simeon found its fulfillment during the time of our Saviour's suffering. While God's Son was hanging on the tree, "There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

According to tradition, Jesus' dear mother met her Son as He was carrying His cross to Golgotha, but it does not mention any sacred locality for this meeting of Mary and her Divine Son. During the course of the Fourteenth Century, Christians began to locate the spots consecrated by the Passion of Christ, and among these was the place where Mary is said to have fainted at the sight of her suffering Son. But a little later she regained composure and maintained heroic behavior at the foot of

the Cross. The author considers Mary as a woman and a mother, both when meeting Christ on His way to Golgatha and at the Crucifixion.

"When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved, standing by, He said to His mother: 'Woman, behold thy Son!' Then said He to the disciple: 'Behold thy mother!' " What forgetfulness of self, what filial love and to the "Mother" and "Son" what parting words!

Mary was a respectable widow of 48 years, and the mother of the leader of the New Religious Movement. The Roman Government was much afraid that this would turn into an open revolt and armed conflict, for which reason they co-operated with the Jews to crucify Him, the Son of Mary the widow.

Mary must have been glad to accept John as her own boy, because of the command of her own Son Jesus from the Cross, otherwise she could not have accepted even this handsome young disciple as her son. Jesus had other brethren but they were in the "world," not yet converted to His doctrine.

And how could He as the Son of God trust one of His little lambs to a Gentile.

The 22 year old Theologían in Jesus' Ministry was attached to Him, and it was natural for Jesus to think of him and recommend his mother to his protection. Soon the first persecution was to begin against all Christians and even if she was not so well identified with them, "She was the Mother of the First One" and had once traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum leaving her own religious service at the Synagogue with her Jewish congregation to hear a Christian sermon from the lips of her own Son. Mary very probably didn't "hit the sawdust" or respond to the "altar call" nor even walk quietly and with dignity after the benediction to the inquirers' room; but she was very willing to follow Jesus and she did by obeying Christ's last instructions and by going with the Apostle of Love to his own home where his father Zebedee and his mother Salome were both alive (St. Mark 15: 40). "Not living death in their sins, but in life in Jesus Christ."

Mary is now living with the people converted by her Son to the Christian faith and she is

getting along well. We find her for the last time in the company of one hundred and twenty "waiting disciples." Besides the Eleven there are other groups, "the Women" and Mary herself, the mother of Jesus. A company of women had followed the Lord and his disciples and contributed to their support in the days of his Galilean ministry. Among them were included Mary Magdalene, another Mary, Salome, Joanna and others. They had come up on the last journey to Jerusalem and some of them had won the great reward of receiving the first tiding of His resurrection and of being the first witness of the risen Christ which won for them this high place in the Church, which was so contrary to Oriental custom.

Among "the rest" must have been some who had accompanied the apostles since the baptism of John, such as Joseph Barnabas, Matthias, and many of the seventy, personal friends of the Lord of Lazarus, Martha and Mary; disciples such as the "Goodman of the house;" Cleophas, John, Mark and his mother Mary. We may probably add Joseph Barnabas and Silas and possibly Simon of Cyrene,

Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. In the Gospel of St. Luke we find the same groups—the body of disciples (vi:13) the woman (viii: 2, 3) and the Twelve (vi:14) (xxiv:9, 10, 33). With such company Mary remained for the last seven weeks.

"When they were all together in the upper room all these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the woman, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." It was not Mary but Peter who acted as head of the assembly (Acts 15). Mary behaved in the upper room in Jerusalem as she had behaved in the grotto at Bethlehem. In Bethlehem she had cared for the infant Jesus, in Jerusalem for the Spirit of the Christ.

And there we leave her.

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